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Annual ministerial review on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women"

Statement submitted by Association tunisienne des mères, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

Women's economic empowerment

The empowerment of women and girls is essential to the achievement of development, peace and security and human rights in all our regions. In the current economic climate, no country can afford to underutilize women's skills and talents. That is why a key focus for us is increasing the number of women in leadership and governance positions. The major progress has been in access to education and employment at all levels.

The main objective of our non-governmental organization is to support and advocate women's rights whether in urban or in rural regions, working inside and abroad on women's issues, sustainable development and solidarity. Information and communications technology contributes towards fulfilling women's values and rights as full human beings who have an effective role in achieving sustainable development.

Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women is a central means for reaching all the other Millennium Development Goals. We can promote equality between men and women's economic empowerment by exhorting many active participants to carry the torch and pass it on to others. In this context, we have to: (a) empower women and families, in particular girls, and place them at the centre of poverty-reduction policies; (b) take action towards reducing the gender gap in access to information and communications technology resources by creating specialized information and communications technology centres for women and families, increasing the availability of and access to computer skills training and to the Internet; (c) work on removing gender barriers in education and training and promoting equal employment opportunities in information and communications technology-related fields for women and families; (d) make computer education compulsory in schools; (e) develop educational and training programmes using information and communications technologies to eradicate illiteracy and poverty; (f) facilitate access and use of information and communications technology to improve economic conditions and eliminate poverty and illiteracy among people, in general, and women in particular; and (g) encourage partnerships between women in politics, business and development.

It is worth noting that in Tunisia, many amendments have been introduced and have enriched the code of personal status, especially those related to the employability of women. New policies have been established to fight against unemployment in order to help graduate students have a paid part-time job inside associations. Legislations and mechanisms have helped the promotion of women's empowerment, from simple equality to active partnerships that guarantee the launching of a balanced civil society.

Milestones in the advancement and empowerment of Tunisian women

1956: Foundation of the National Union of Tunisian Women

1957: Tunisia ratifies the Night Work (Women) Convention

1958: Education reform: the right to education is granted to children of both sexes, from ages 6 to 16

1959: Proclamation of the Tunisian Constitution: equality of rights and duties between men and women, women are granted the right to vote and to stand for elections

1959: Tunisia ratifies the Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation

1966: The Labour Code is instituted, addressing non-discrimination between men and women in !abour

1967: Tunisia ratifies the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriages

1967: Tunisia ratifies the Convention on the Political Rights of Women

1969: Tunisia ratifies the Convention against Discrimination in Education

1985: Tunisia ratifies the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1989: Consolidation of the Centre for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women

1990: Foundation of National Chamber of Women Heads of Enterprises

1990: Foundation of the National Federation of Tunisian Women Farmers

1991: Schooling is compulsory and free of charge for children of both sexes, from ages 6 to 16

1992: Creation of the secretariat of State and National Council for Women and the Family

1992: Foundation of the Tunisian Mothers' Association

1993: Creation of the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs

1993: Creation of the Observatory on the Condition of Women in Tunisia at the Centre for Research Studies, Documentation and Information on Women

1993: The Fund for the Payment of Alimonies and Divorce Pensions

1993: Amendment to the Personal Status Code, instituting the principle of co-responsibility in family affairs, amendment to the Labour Code, the Penal Code and the Code of Nationality

1995: Promulgation of the Child Protection Code, ensuring the protection of the rights of children in general and girls in particular

1998: Promulgation of the right to choose the system of joint property between spouses

1998: Tunisian women can, by right, give their family names to their children of unknown parentage; the father's name is given to the child on basis of genetic fingerprinting

1999: Institution of Tahar Haddad prize for the enhancement of women's images in the media

2000: Creation of the National Commission for the Advancement of Rural Women

2001: Amendment to the Code of Nationality by virtue of which women may legally transmit their nationality to their children born of a non-Tunisian father, if the latter is deceased or legally irresponsible

2003: The quota of women candidates to the legislative and municipal elections on the Constitutional Democratic Rally list increases to 25 per cent

2004: Declaration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 1994+10

2005: Access to information and communications technology for women (Beijing+10)

2006: Mothers in jail may deliver their babies out of prison

2006: Celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Personal Status Code and decision for age of vote to be 18

2007: Two thirds of salary for mothers working part-time, thereby keeping their social advantages

2008: Women in decision-making positions increased to 30 per cent

2009: Declaration of the 2010 Year of Youth, and decision for age of marriage to be 18

Women in technology

- Women in technology empowers women and expands their participatioa in the workforce by providing them with training opportunities in business planning, professional development and information technology
- In Tunisia, the programmes also aim to train local women's organizations to become financially sustainable, support current workforce demands and empower women to play an integral role in shaping their country's future
- Training for women, women's professional development networks and business planning for non-governmental organizations

In conclusion, we have to say that we must redouble our efforts to fight discrimination against women since it remains the major barrier to the empowerment of women and girls.